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SUBJECT: OPERATION MOSHTARAK - SITUATIONAL UPDATE FOR FEBRUARY 14,
2010

REF: (A) KABUL 554, (B) KABUL 543, (C) KABUL 466, (D) KABUL 115, (E)
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¶1. (SBU) Summary. Operations continued on February 14, with the heaviest activity taking place in northern Marjah, but media reports have remained extremely positive about the current status of Operation Moshtarak. Governor Mangal convened a budget conference in Lashkar Gah to develop line-item operational budgets and capital investments required to deliver the agreed upon packages of services for Nad Ali District. Deputy Governor Sattar announced the upcoming registration for a cash-for-work program to a well-attended shura in northern Nad Ali in the Showal area, where attendees expressed concern over the security situation in their district but remained enthusiastic about the overall situation. A ministerial delegation from Kabul arrived in Lashkar Gah today to discuss the operations with provincial and district leadership and to bring central government support for the future outcomes. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Operations continued in Nad Ali district on February 14, with the heaviest activity taking place in northern Marjah. ISAF reporting indicates that the enemy is trying to flee to Nawa and Pakistan. The following is a situation report, reflecting the activities taking place on February 14, 2010.

POLITICAL UPDATE

Provincial:

¶3. (SBU) In north Nad Ali, Helmand Deputy Governor Sattar hosted a successful shura, attended by over 200 village elders and residents. The main topic of discussion was the latest security situation in the district, but the residents remained confident in the operations and looked forward to upcoming development opportunities to begin, strongly requesting for schools and clinics to be placed in their area. Sattar also announced that registration for a "Cash for Work" program would begin within the next few days, to the delight of the shura attendees.

¶4. (SBU) The civilian personnel at the Regimental Combat Team (RCT) at FOB Dwyer have established a briefing, twice daily, for Nad Ali Deputy District Governor Haji Zahir (who will be located in Marjah) on the on-going operations, including any items of note on the ISAF, ANSF, enemy and civilian casualties. Additionally, Zahir is in constant communication with Mangal's office daily.

National:

¶5. (SBU) In a strong showing of central government support, a ministerial delegation - which included Interior Minister Atmar, Deputy Interior Minister Mangal, Defense Minister Wardak, and Deputy Defense Minister Bismullah Khan - traveled to Helmand with Commander of the ISAF Joint Command to meet with provincial and district leadership and to view the conflict area. Hosted by Governor

Mangal, the delegation will participate in a series of meetings to be fully briefed on the latest of Operation Moshtarak and the next steps forward.

MEDIA

¶6. (SBU) The international media continued to be positive in its assessment of the operation, with the only negative news being the late-breaking statement by President Karzai on the alleged civilian casualty incident in Marjah. Reporters are showing increased interest in the civilian story, with such outlets as CNN, the Associated Press and the Financial Times calling to ask about plans for governance and stabilization in Marjah. They are fascinated by the degree of planning and coordination involved in the stabilization effort, including the fact that the Deputy District Governor-Designate and the future District Support Team are already working together and poised to enter as soon as conditions permit. The PRT Lashkar Gah Lead gave a five-minute live interview on Sky News, answering questions on the civilian effort. The Afghan-run Tolo TV has been running an excellent piece that explains the entire operation, including extensive quotations from Governor Mangal and several Afghan generals.

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

¶7. (SBU) At the February 14 Helmand District Delivery Program (DDP) Budget Workshop, USAID-funded trainers from the re-launched provincial Civil Service Institute facilitated Ministry Directors to develop line-item operational budgets and capital investments required to deliver the agreed upon packages of services for Nad Ali

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District. Directors were grouped according to the eight strands of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and were mentored by PRT staff. As expected, operating budgets and capital requests were significant -though most were tempered with reality. However, expectation management is key at this point, and the PRT will work with the various provincial and district officials to ensure full understanding of all stabilization and development initiatives.

¶8. (SBU) The next step in Helmand's DDP process is the collation and summarization of budgets, which is being completed by local Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) staff. Then, the Governor and Provincial Development Council (PDC) will approve. Once this approval is obtained, the "donor conference" is likely to be held on or about February 17. The objective for this conference will be to secure donor commitments for as many capital investments (schools, clinics, office buildings, vehicles, etc.) from the various civilian and military funding streams. Capital expenses not picked up by donors will be submitted to the Ministry of Finance for funding by the UK under their DDP support mechanism. For USAID, the donor conference is about matching existing USAID programming to new ministry requests for development items apart from buildings in Nad Ali.

¶9. (SBU) At the Governor's request, Helmand PRT is planning a Nadi Ali Stabilization launch event on or about February 18 in Lashkar Gah. High-level Embassy participation by USAID Mission Director Bill Frej is planned to demonstrate sustained civilian support for Governor Mangal's efforts, with plans by the UK and Danish Governments to do the same. The event plans to cover the entire civilian effort, with the Governor taking the lead and introducing the ongoing DDP process and other projects, including USAID's 601 road through Marjah.

IDP UPDATE

¶10. (SBU) To date, the Department of Refugees and Repatriation in Lashkar Gah has registered 941 internally displaced families, and approximately 200 families received humanitarian assistance from the Department. (Note: Of the total number of registered families, only two families have requested tents for shelter purposes, which mean that most families are able to find adequate shelter during

these operations with GIRoA assistance. End note.) As the fighting likely increases, the number of IDP families is expected to also increase, but the PRT is continuing to work with the UN and the Helmand Department of Refugees and Repatriation to prepare for any sudden upticks in numbers.

¶11. (U) This cable was drafted by the U.S. civilian personnel based in Helmand.